

10

Lesson Ten

FOCUS: What Makes a Writer Great?

Works of literature illustrate the connection between individuals. Great poems and stories articulate and explore the world around us and the mysteries of our daily lives in the larger context of the human struggle. The writer's voice, style, and sense of rhythm inform imagery, plot, characters, and themes. By creating opportunities to learn, imagine, and reflect, great works of literature affect many generations of readers, changing lives, challenging assumptions, and breaking new ground.

Discussion Activities

Divide students into groups and have each group determine the most important themes of Poe's work. Have a spokesperson from each group explain the group's decision, using references from Poe's writings. Write these themes on the board. Ask them to discuss, within groups, other writers they know whose work deals with similar themes. Do any of these writers remind them of Edgar Allan Poe? If these writers are of a more modern time, ask students if they believe the writer might have been influenced by Poe.

Ask students to describe the characteristics of a great writer. List these on the board. A great writer can be the voice of a generation. On the other hand, a great writer may also give voice to a unique sensibility and a personal vision of life and its possibilities. What kind of voice does Poe create in his poems and tales? Does his work speak for more than one man and his personal concerns?

Writing Exercise

Ask students to write a short essay exploring their personal reactions to the work of Edgar Allan Poe. Students should go beyond expressing like or dislike. Ask them to make a list of the emotions they felt while reading Poe's work, and to examine why. Which poems or stories did they most relate to, and which remained strange or difficult to comprehend? Why?

Homework

Students will finish their essays and present their essay topics and arguments to the class.